

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

XMB-02 AID-05 OES-06 SAB-01 SAM-01 /114 W

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R 260012Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1072

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 11151

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, JA, XF

SUBJECT: JAPANESE DIPLOMATS MULL MIDEAST QUESTIONS

1. JAPANESE AMBASSADORS TO FIFTEEN MIDEAST COUNTRIES
MET AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE JULY 7 TO 9 TO DISCUSS CURRENT
TRENDS IN THE REGION AND TO RECOMMEND DIRECTIONS FOR
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JAPANESE POLICY THERE. CONFERENCE ATTRACTED BROAD

MEDIA INTEREST. IT AFFORDED FONOFF OPPORTUNITY TO PUSH FAVORED THEMES IN BRIEFINGS BY AMBASSADORS TO JOURNALISTS AND ALSO, ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, TO LDP POLITICIANS, BUSINESS CIRCLES AND POLICY-MAKERS IN OTHER MINISTRIES.

2. CONFERENCE REACHED TWO CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO JAPANESE DIPLOMATIC STYLE IN THE MIDEAST. FIRST, JAPANESE ENVOYS HAVE BEEN ENJOINED TO PLAY MORE "POSITIVE ROLE" IN PROMOTION OF LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS IN REGION. SECOND, AMBASSADORS CALLED FOR VISITS TO MIDEAST CAPITALS BY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. CONFERENCE(S) JUDGEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ONLY ADVISORY; NEVERTHELESS THEY ARE IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN JAPANESE "CONSENSUS-BUILDING" PROCESS.

3. ON GENERAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE REGION, ENVOYS JUDGED THAT SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON WILL LIKELY BE OF LONG DURATION, AND THAT DUE TO INTRA-ARAB STRIFE THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY EITHER OF ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OR OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT DURING YEAR TO COME. ARAB STATES' STANCE TOWARD "DELICATE;" FONOFF TOLD US THIS REFERS TO CONSERVATIVE REGIMES' APPREHENSION OF AN UNSTABLE, RADICAL AND SOVIET-ARMED PALESTINIAN STATE. THE ENVOYS PRONOUNCED POSITION ON PALESTINE ISSUE ENUNCIATED BY JAPAN IN NOVEMBER 1973 STILL VALID AND, WHILE DECLARING JAPANESE LEVERAGE ON PROBLEM "EXTREMELY LIMITED," URGED CONTINUATION OF "HELPFUL AND FAIR" JAPANESE ROLE IN UN. FONOFF TOLD US THAT MINORITY URGED JAPAN SEEK TO PARTICIPATE IN GENEVA CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE, SHOULD IT RECONVENE, AND CONTRIBUTE EQUIPMENT AND/OR NON-MILITARY PERSONNEL TO UNEF, UNDOF-TYPE VENTURES. FONOFF TOLD US FURTHER THAT ENVOYS, WHILE JUDGING NO PALESTINE SETTLEMENT POSSIBLE ABSENT A "LEADING US ROLE," FORESAW LITTLE CHANCE US CAN TAKE MAJOR INITIATIVE BEFORE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS. APROPOS OF THAT, FONOFF SOURCE SAID JAPANESE UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT WILL SHORTLY

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VISIT MIDDLE EAST. HE DID NOT IDENTIFY SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION, AND WHEN EMBOFF SAID HE AT A LOSS TO SAY WHEN, WHERE OR WHY PRESIDENT MIGHT GO, HE ASKED THAT EMBASSY PASS ON ANY HARD INFORMATION WE MAY RECEIVE.

4. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE AMBASSADORS CONCLUDED THEY SHOULD PLAY A LARGER ROLE IN PROMOTING JAPAN'S

ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN THE REGION. IN THE CASE OF OIL PRODUCERS, HOWEVER, THE GOJ ROLE MUST LIE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF "INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION" -- A TERM COINED BY THE FONOFF TO DESCRIBE PROJECTS CARRIED OUT LARGELY WITH PRIVATE FINANCING. THE ENVOYS IMPLIED THEY WOULD FAVOR A GOJ-BACKED, INVESTMENT RISK INSURANCE SYSTEM; BUT THEY RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WOULD NOT BY ITSELF DISPEL JAPANESE INDUSTRY'S CAUTIOUSNESS IN COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO MANY MIDDLE EAST PROJECTS. THE ENVOYS LIMITED THEIR CONCLUSIONS TO CALLING FOR "MORE COORDINATION" BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY WHEN JAPANESE FIRMS ARE COMPETING FOR A SINGLE EXPORT PRICE.

5. AS PART OF THE CONTINUING EFFORT TO COLLATE AND DISSEMINATE INFORMATION OF THE MIDEAST, A GOJ TEAM FROM MOFA, MITI, MOF AND JAPAN EXIM BANK WILL MEET WITH JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN AND DIPLOMATS FROM THE REGION ON AUGUST 25-27 IN ISTANBUL. THIS IS AN ANNUAL GATHERING WHICH UNTIL THREE YEARS AGO CONCENTRATED ON HOW TO REDUCE THE REGION'S TRADE ACCOUNT IMBALANCE IN JAPAN'S FAVOR. FOCUS THIS YEAR WILL BE ON THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AND EXPORT PROSPECTS FOR TEN OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES.

6. IN GENERAL, THE ENVOYS FOUND PROSPECTS FAVORABLE FOR JAPANESE EXPORTS TO THE MIDDLE EAST. PERHAPS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF PERSISTENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND BOTTLENECK PROBLEMS, SEVERAL MIDDLE EAST NATIONS ARE TAKING A MORE REALISTIC APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE ENVOYS ALSO NOTED THAT KUWAIT, UAE AND QATAR HAVE APPROACHED IMPORT SATURATION; IRAN IS EXPERIENCING BALANCE OF

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PAYMENTS PRESSURES AND SAUDI ARABIA HAS SCALED DOWN ITS ECONOMIC PLANS. ALTHOUGH THESE DEVELOPMENTS MAY IMPLY A REDUCTION IN LARGE PLANT ORDERS, THE ENVOYS ANTICIPATE FEWER PROBLEMS ARISING FROM EXCESSIVELY HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

7. ENDORSEMENT OF NEED FOR HIGH LEVEL VISITS TO MIDEAST WAS, FONOFF TOLD US, ROUTINE FOR A CONFERENCE OF THIS SORT. MORE THAN BEFORE, HOWEVER, JAPANESE ENVOYS ARE SAID TO SENSE THAT JAPAN SUFFERING BY CONTRAST TO OTHER INDUSTRIAL POWERS. NO JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER HAS EVER VISITED THE REGION WHILE IN OFFICE, ALLEGEDLY CAUSING MIDEAST LEADERS TO BELIEVE JAPAN ATTACHES LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO REGION. FONOFF SOURCE ADDED IN CONFIDENCE THAT PM MIKI IS VERY DESIROUS OF MAKING THE TRIP, FONMIN MIYAZAWA

LESS SO. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS WITHIN PAST YEAR MIKI HAS BLOCKED OUT TIME TO VISIT FOUR (UNSPECIFIED) COUNTRIES. TWICE THESE PLANS WERE FRUSTRATED BY DOMESTIC POLITICAL FLAPS, AND ONCE (RAMADAN) ARABS RULED VISIT UNTIMELY.

8. AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE TEN JAPANESE RED ARMY MEMBERS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN KUALA LUMPUR INCIDENT ARE STILL UNDER WHAT AMOUNTS TO HOUSE ARREST IN TRIPOLI. FONOFF SOURCE TOLD US THAT ALTHOUGH JAPANESE EMBASSY IN LIBYA HAS HAD NO DIRECT CONTACT WITH TERRORISTS, IT HAS NO REASON TO DOUBT ASSURANCES OF GOJ MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, WHICH HAVE BEEN INDIRECTLY CONFIRMED BY THIRD-COUNTRY DIPLOMATS. FONOFF BELIEVES HANDFUL OF RED ARMY ACTIVISTS ELSEWHERE, PRINCIPALLY IN LEBANON, IS DISORGANIZED, DISPIRITED AND PROBABLY INCAPABLE OF STAGING SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, AMBASSADORS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TOKYO11151
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760286-0437
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760720/aaaaarlj.tel
Line Count: 187
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <13 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JAPANESE DIPLOMATS MULL MIDEAST QUESTIONS
TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, OCON, JA, XF, XC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006